



# Genesis

## VOICE OF STUDENTS

### Tragedy and the healing response

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September 11 found me, like most of America, riveted to CNN, watching a hijacked commercial airliner fly into the World Trade Center in an endless, multiangled loop. To this day, I am still partially dissociated from the reality of what happened on that day. Attending school and worrying about an internal medicine final, I find it difficult to realize that the United States is at war. CNN is still buzzing with exposés on Afghanistan, but in the few moments I have to watch television, I find myself guiltily switching to see what "Scrubs" is all about. Walking through the quad at lunchtime, I see a posted reminder of a blood drive, and I marvel that such a horrific event, burned into memory, could turn a nation of people into healers and helpers.

The palliative medicine that I saw practiced in America that day and the days following transcended the medical profession. People donated blood at such a rate that CNN commentator Paula Zahn said that she had tried to donate but didn't get enough of a leave from reporting to stand in the 5-hour line of people waiting to give. At the USC campus and campuses across the country, emergency blood drives were organized, and students were informed

via e-mail. Along with my friends and family, I spent much of the day on the phone, checking up on loved ones on the East Coast and trying to talk over the insanity of the day. Each person served as a psychological consultation to family and friends, and each person had countless other people helping to deal with the tragedy.

Through the donations, support, and consoling, America proved itself to be a "collective physician," treating itself. The definition of "physician" opened wide to rise above degrees, accolades, and educational prowess. In the darkest hour America has seen in decades, a vast population beyond that of just health professionals carried out the practices of medicine and palliative care. There was medicine in the comfort offered by a police officer, a respirator shared at the cost of burning lungs, and the overwhelming donation of blood products across America.

A week after the event, a different type of story came in, not from CNN but through local television and radio. These were sad tales of intolerance and bigotry. An Egyptian storeowner was shot in his place of business 10 minutes from my house, his murderers leaving behind a full cash register and any chance of robbery as a motive. Mus-



In all tragedies, many different people become healers

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lim students and their families received death threats via phone and mail. Although tragic, the response to these stories was positive; people of all races and creeds denounced the hate crimes, and people took action to see that the perpetrators would be punished as severely as those responsible for the World Trade Center attack. In “the body” that is America, a few bad bacteria find themselves outnumbered by unified red blood cells and pursued by a strong immune system. America is trying to keep

itself healed by promoting unity rather than degeneration at the hands of the malignancy of mistrust.

I drive to school and still see people on street corners (no matter how early, it seems) frantically waving American flags. The Stars and Stripes can be seen whipping from the window or antenna of cars at every intersection. It is this spirit of unity that heals our population the most. Right now, the American flag seems to be the most effective antidepressant on the market.